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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the 113 issues of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Bulletin published from January 1970 through May 1982 revealed that 23 percent of the over 2,000 articles printed dealt with development of the educational program, 10 percent dealt with student behavior and discipline, and 10 percent covered general issues of education and secondary education. The principalship accounted for 9 percent of the articles, while 7 percent discussed leadership and management, another 7 percent dealt with staff supervision and development, and 6 percent concerned evaluation of the educational program and student progress. None of the other 12 topic areas accounted for more than 5 percent of the articles. Of the 2,500 authors represented, 41 percent were affiliated with colleges and universities and only 24 percent were actually secondary school principals. Females constituted 14 percent of the authors. The researcher concludes that this analysis reveals a number of biases in the content and authorship of the NASSP Bulletin, and that several pertinent topic areas have been neglected. (PGD)

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The NASSP Bulletin: 1970 - Present

Analysis of Content and Authorship

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The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin (NASSP Bulletin) is a venerable and influential publication in secondary education. It is not a captive publication of the professional association it represents but invites submissions from contributors at large. However, like other professional journals, what is published in the Bulletin is subject to review and hence control by its editorial board and consultants. Can the Bulletin be fairly regarded as presenting an accurate reflection of American secondary education, especially as concerns the principalship?

In addressing this question, all issues of the NASSP Bulletin from January, 1970, to the most recent May, 1982, one were examined for an analysis of content and of authorship. (Features such as book reviews and announcements such as of NASSP's financial status were excluded from consideration.) These 113 issues contained over 2,000 articles presented by more than 2,500 authors (because of multiple authorship). Articles were classified as to content by utilizing the categorical chapters of a well-known text on the secondary principalship,[1] with five additional categories added to cover other material printed in the Bulletin. Results of this classification of the content of articles are shown in Table 1.

As revealed by Table 1, by far the most popular content of the Bulletin concerns the development of theeducational program, with this category including all curriculum subject matter, issues, and alternatives. While it is not surprising to find such a topic well represented

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[1]Charles L. Wood, Everett W. Nicholson, and Dale G. Findley, The Secondary School Principal: Manager and Supervisor (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979).

Table 1

Content Areas of Articles in the NASSP Bulletin

Rank	Content Area	Percent
1	Development of the Educational Program	23
2	Student Behavior and Discipline	10
2	General Issues of Education and Secondary Education	10
3	The Principalship	9
4	Leadership and Management	7
4	Staff Supervision and Development	7
5	Evaluation of the Educational Program and Student Progress	6
6	Communication, Public Relations, and School-Community Relations	5
7	Student Activities	4
8	Problem-Solving and Decision-Making; Conflict and Change	3
8	Middle and Junior High Schools	3
9	Scheduling	2
9	Counseling and Guidance	2
9	Supporting School Services	2
9	Collective Bargaining	2
9	Special Education	2
9	Secondary Education in Other Nations	2
10	Urban Education	1
10	Recruitment, Selection, and Orientation	1

in a publication of this type, it is perhaps noteworthy that articles on the curriculum have been published more than twice (23 percent) as frequently as those of the next most popular topics (10 percent).

Other subjects ranked relatively high include items of a general nature on education and secondary education, as well as those reflecting understandable concern with student behavior, the role of the principal, leadership and management functions, and evaluation and growth of staff members, programs, and students. Considering the "graying of the education profession," it is also not surprising that recruiting, selecting, and orienting new staff constitute the least popular category.

The rank order does, however, suggest that perhaps insufficient attention has been paid to some specific areas and issues which burgeoned in secondary education in the 1970's and with which secondary administrators have to concern themselves--specific aspects of urban education, special education, and collective bargaining. Further, as is quickly discernible from Table 1, the Bulletin concerns itself almost exclusively with American secondary education, rarely publishing articles on secondary education elsewhere.

The NASSP Bulletin is a theme-oriented journal, devoting a major portion of most issues to a given subject, although a good many of them are acknowledged as potpourris. While the space given over to such topics varies, so that the theme itself cannot be taken as a literal indication of an issue's content, these "headlines" also provide a suggestion of the journal's concerns. Not surprisingly, most themes have involved various aspects of the curriculum, the principalship, principal-staff interactions, student behavior and discipline, and leadership, management, and coping with change.

Some particulars of the content analysis of articles published by the Bulletin are also worthy of further comment. For one thing, the Bulletin is fairly exclusively preoccupied with senior high school matters; despite a thematic nod in one issue to "schools in the middle," only about 3 percent of its articles treat matters of particular concern to middle, intermediate, and junior high schools. For another, the Bulletin is also rather exclusively centered on public education, as less than 1 percent of its content is devoted to nonpublic and/or religious schooling, although this was also the theme of a recent issue. (Nonpublic secondary school authors are also underrepresented, as noted below.)

The Bulletin's emphasis on curriculum matters has been a consistent one over the years. The single most popular subject matter area has been English and related language arts, with vocational/career education a fairly close second. Some innovations in the organization and presentation of the curriculum (such as computer-assisted instruction, learning resource centers, and minicourses) have, however, been little represented in this journal's pages, while others (such as alternative programs, differentiated staffing, and team teaching) which were initially heavily reported show a definite decline in representation.

In the area of staff development, the major emphasis has been not on inservice or supervisory activities, but on the evaluation of teachers. This stress offers some contrast to concerns with student development, where harsher considerations of enforcing discipline can be seen to have yielded somewhat to an increasing emphasis on promoting positive behavior, humanizing relations with students, and preventing truancy and "dropping out." However, in the area of student activities, reports about athletics, which after all involve a rather small and selective sample of the total

high school population, have vastly outnumbered those next most frequently reported (student publications and student government), so that there has perhaps been insufficient attention paid to the involvement of a wide range of students in school activities.

The Bulletin's view of special education is also of interest. To begin with, even with the most generous definition of "special education" (such as including the gifted in this category, as does Pennsylvania), only about 2 percent of this journal's articles reflect this topic, although some increase in coverage began with 1979 issues--some four years after the enactment of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Since special education existed long before the passage of P.L. 94-142, its representation in this journal is thus not only sparse but also quite tardy. If special programs for the gifted and for bilingual students are excluded from the "special education" category, coverage of those programs and students more traditionally included in special education falls to well below 1 percent--and encompasses only an occasional article on such crucial issues as dealing with the implementation of P.L. 94-142 regulations, mandated Individualized Education Programs and Least Restrictive Environment requirements such as mainstreaming, the vast amount of inservice training necessary for special and regular classroom teachers and other school personnel, arrangements for accommodating physically handicapped students, supervising and evaluating the special education teacher, and the questionable applicability of competency and/or diploma requirements to handicapped students--although public schools are now required to include programs for students with such severe and/or multiple handicaps that they were formerly excluded from attendance. The NASSP Bulletin's view would appear to be that secondary principals have exceptionally lit-

tle concern for this mandated major change in public education (which indeed may be the case, but if so, it behooves such a journal to bring such matters to their attention)--and when they do direct attention to "special education," it is with regard to the gifted, a classification not included in P.L. 94-142.

The subject of women in educational administration has been treated on two occasions by the Bulletin during the period reviewed, once in 1974 and again in 1980, with these two presentations in considerable contrast. The "headline" in the earlier issue actually represented only one article, with this one ironically the only article in the issue with a female author. The second treatment encompassed eleven articles, all but one with a female author or co-author. (However, as noted below, women continue to be considerably underrepresented as contributors to this publication.)

Authorship of Bulletin articles from 1970 to the present rests almost entirely with those directly employed in education, with only an occasional article (usually, a report of an invited address at a NASSP annual convention) from an observer outside the field. Table 2 provides a listing of the primary current (at time of publication) affiliation of authors of Bulletin articles.

As readily apparent from Table 2, nearly half of the material presented in the Bulletin is the work of college and university level authors, with those (principals, assistant principals, teachers, supervisors, etc.) at a public high school level contributing next most heavily, representing about another quarter of the authors. Again, underrepresentation of those from "schools in the middle" is suggested. There is also a scarcity of authors at the state office level, somewhat surprising given the increasing involvement of state mandated and regulated school programs. Underrepre-

Table 2

Primary Affiliation of Authors of Articles in the NASSP Bulletin

Rank	Primary Affiliation	Percent
1	College or University	41
2	Senior High School	23
3	District Office Administration, Supervision, or District-Wide Projects	13
4	Other Educational Agencies, Governmental Offices, or Businesses	11
5	Junior High School	4
6	NASSP	3
7	Middle or Intermediate School	2
7	Private Secondary School	2
8	State Department of Education or Public Instruction	1
8	School Principalship at Mixed or Unspecified Level	1

sentation of authors from private secondary schools, while perhaps not as surprising, is also present and is inconsistent with the fact that, by the Bulletin's own estimate, 20 percent of the nation's schools are private and enroll over 10 percent of the school population.[2]

Further, if the data are otherwise subdivided to reveal which authors were actually principals or assistant principals at any public or private secondary level, one discovers that less than a quarter (24 per-

[2]Joseph M. Cronin and Regan Kenyon, "A New Phenomenon: State Government, Its Relationship to Private Schools," NASSP Bulletin, 66:19, March, 1982.

cent) of the more than 2,500 authors were actually secondary principals at the time of publication of their articles. (Other authors were sometimes noted as previously having been principals, but such personal history data were too inconsistently reported to include in this consideration.) In any event, although the Bulletin is an organ of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, over 75 percent of its content is presented by authors who are not secondary principals, at least at the time of publication. Material published by the Bulletin may well be appropriate for secondary school principals, but it is largely not by them.

An attempt was also made to determine the sex of authors whose work has been published in the Bulletin during the period under consideration. As this classification could be accomplished only by consideration of the first name of the author and from an occasional reference in a footnote or abstract to the author by a gender pronoun, it is likely that females were slightly underrepresented in the count. (First names of indeterminate gender, such as "Terry" or "Lee," were not categorized as female.) However, since occasions of doubt were few, the frequency count is regarded as rather accurate.

It appears that only about 14 percent of the authors whose work is published in the Bulletin are female, and that this level of representation holds true for each of the affiliations listed in Table 2--except for authors from state offices (10 percent), from private schools (8 percent), and from NASSP itself (3 percent), where the disproportion is even more striking.

It should be pointed out that in regard to publishing the work of female authors, the Bulletin is to some extent reflecting almost exactly the proportionate representation of females in public school administra-

tion at all levels combined, and that it has to some extent "overrepresented" them at secondary levels. By its own report, although female teachers outnumber male ones by a two-to-one ratio, women hold the principalship in only 13.5 percent of the nation's schools--and primarily at an elementary school level, as less than 3 percent of junior high schools and only 1.4 percent of senior high schools have female principals,[3] with the number of women in such positions said to be declining.[4] However, since nearly half of the authors whose work is published by the Bulletin are employed at a college or university level (including on a great number of special projects as well as in faculty positions), where females are somewhat more generously represented, it might be expected that more female authors would be presented in its pages--but the proportion for this group of authors remains the same, viz., 14 percent are female.

This analysis of the NASSP Bulletin over the period of the past decade or so indicates a number of biases in its content and in its authorship. While its subject matter centers on traditionally relevant issues of general concerns of secondary education, curriculum, student behavior, the principalship, leadership and management, and the growth of staff, programs, and students, it has neglected a number of other pertinent areas, including urban education, special education, and collective bargaining, all of which are certainly creating pronounced changes in American education and in the activities of school administrators. The

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[3]Jacqueline Peters, "The Quest of the New Woman in Public School Education: 1980," NASSP Bulletin, 64:16, December, 1980.

[4]Susan C. Paddock, "Women Principals: The Rule or the Exception?" NASSP Bulletin, 64:1-4, December, 1980.

Bulletin also focuses almost exclusively on secondary education in the United States, rarely departing from this national provincialism. While much of its content is of course relevant by extrapolation to the entire spectrum of secondary education, it is nonetheless true that the Bulletin is aimed primarily at senior high school matters, with little attention paid to the special concerns of "schools in the middle," and at public secondary education, to the near exclusion of matters dealing with the particulars of private schools. Authors of Bulletin articles are almost exclusively males and are not themselves secondary administrators in any type of setting, instead usually being affiliated with colleges and universities.

Whether these biases are a result of the explicit or implicit values and intent of the referees who screen submissions to the Bulletin, or whether the same types of articles are simply repeatedly submitted by the same types of authors, it appears that some judicious editorial "affirmative action" is indicated, both in content and in authorship, for a publication representing a nationwide organization of secondary principals. For the present, however, the NASSP Bulletin can fairly be characterized as a journal which presents articles about mainstream issues in the American public senior high school, written by male authors from higher education settings. One cannot, it appears, accurately judge this book by its cover.

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